

biography, because criticism is much more
 concerned with
 feelings and less with facts. But that is not an
 excuse for
 this particular obsession with virtues and
 vices, sheep and
 goats. And again, in the essay there is a
 similarly typical
 contrast from the first between the fathers of
 that literary
 form in France and in England—Montaigne
 and Bacon:
 the one so engagingly amused by speculation
 for its own
 sake, the other so drily practical and prim and
arriviste—
 so much so, that the first French translator
 of Bacon's
Essays could give them the tide: *L'Artisan de*
la Fortune.
 The Englishman treats his intellect as a
 serviceable beast
 of burden; to make it more serviceable still
 he gives it
 blinkers also. It has carried him through the
 gates of many
 Jerusalems. But blinkers mean a measure of
 blindness; and
 in judging life or letters that blindness may
 become
 serious.

It might have been thought that prose,
 especially the
 novel, as nearer to practical life, might have
 succeeded
 better among us than poetry; actually, the
 reverse has
 been the case, except in part of the
 eighteenth century
 and today. For the English are instinctive,
 and poetry
 has in it a larger element of the unconscious,
 of the dream;
 they are individual, and the poet may speak
 for himself
 alone—may even be, like Milton, the
 loneliest of men;
 they are reserved, and poetry provides a
 magic sleeve on
 which the heart may be worn unpecked, a

mystic mantle
'in which the shyest soul may somehow stand
naked in the
market-place, and yet not feel ashamed; they
are repressed
emotionally, and the airy visions of the poet
provide a
better outlet for them than the humours and
sentimental-
ities of many an English novelist; they love
the loneliness
of nature, and *l'icole buisson&re* is the poet's
school; they
are melancholy, and poetry, even the popular
songs of
peoples still in contact with nature, is less
often gay than